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Submission to Health Canada recommends sexual behaviour-based screening for all donors

Last December, Canadian Blood Services made a [submission to Health Canada](#) to focus our donor screening criteria on higher-risk sexual behaviour, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, for all donors and collection types.

If Health Canada approves our submission, we will no longer ask men if they've had sex with another man or ask trans donors about whether they've had lower genital gender-affirming surgery. Instead, we would ask all donors about anal sex in the context of new or multiple recent partners. This would allow us to precisely and reliably identify those who may have a transfusion-transmissible infection, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

In making this change, we will continue to hold ourselves to a high standard of safety for the patients we serve. We have more evidence than ever before, stemming from the [MSM Research Program](#), international data and Canada-specific risk modelling, that indicates this change will not compromise the safety or adequacy of the blood supply. Currently, the risk of HIV being introduced to the blood system is extremely low, and according to the evidence, the proposed change will not increase that risk. External scientific committees have reviewed the details of the evidence and support our conclusion that blood safety will not be compromised by our proposed approach.

Health Canada's review typically takes several months. If we are approved, we would seek to implement the changes as quickly as possible while also taking the time to get it right as we update systems and train employees.

We aim to be an organization that is inclusive and welcoming to all potential donors with minimal restrictions. We are continuing to take steps as an organization to further modify our practices and policies and cultivate a donor/registrant base and workforce that more fully and equitably reflects Canada's diverse population, and that serves an increasingly diverse patient population.

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